

against youth violence, to have the same sort of galvanizing impact on our people that Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Students Against—I think it's now called Destructive Decisions, the campaign to promote seatbelt use. These grassroots campaigns can have a profound effect on the way Americans think and the way they behave. It will be much, much easier now, because of the work that all of you involved in the media have done to bring these public service spots to the people of the United States. But we also need our organized campaign.

So today I have the honor of announcing and introducing the person who will be the executive director of this campaign. His name is Jeff Bleich, and he's here with us on stage. He's been recognized by the American Bar Association as one of our country's leading young attorneys. He's also one of San Francisco's leading civic-minded citizens. He is the father of three beautiful children he desperately wants to have a safe childhood. He has received several prestigious awards for his pro bono legal service. He's built strong connections in Silicon Valley and in Hollywood, both of whom can be of immense help to us in this endeavor. And perhaps most important, he has written a very fine book on youth violence. So I'd like to ask Jeff to stand up, and to thank him for his service. *[Applause]* And thank you for taking on this challenge to protect our children.

Today the Department of Justice is also releasing \$15 million to fund innovative partnerships between local police and school and community groups, something the Attorney General has been pushing since the first day she came here. These partnerships will help schools do everything from training students in conflict resolution techniques to combating drug dealing and use on school grounds.

But as every police officer in America knows, we're kidding ourselves if we think we can conquer youth violence without addressing one of its undeniable catalysts, the appalling ease with which young people gain access to guns. Hillary has already said, and you know that I strongly agree, it is long past time for Congress to step up to its responsibility, and restore some common sense, sanity, and strength to our Nation's gun laws.

Today I ask the Republican majority: When you come back to work, our children will be going back to school; think about them; let's not wait until the next senseless tragedy to pass commonsense gun safety measures to protect them.

Now, I know in a country of 270 million people, and tens of millions of guns, no law can stop every disturbed person from committing a violent act with a gun. But we would never do anything, as a people, if we gave in to the objection that all of our actions would have less than 100 percent impact. The Brady bill has kept over 400,000 gun sales, which should not have occurred, from happening. It has saved countless lives. Closing the gun show loophole will have the same impact. Closing the loopholes in the assault weapons ban will have the same impact.

Doing these other things—will they solve every problem? No. Will they stop every act of violence? No. Will they prevent every madman? No. If we used that kind of excuse, we would all stay in bed every day. We would never get out of bed. We would never get out of bed. We would never hit a lick. So we need all the tools at our disposal. Look what these media people have done. Will this public service ad get every parent in America and every child to talk about every dangerous thing that happens at every school? No. But it will have a huge impact.

And so if the media people are doing their part and the school people are doing their part and the law enforcement people are doing their part, it is time to pass the reasonable and entirely modest measures before the Congress. For those who want to do more, I say, so do I. But that is no reason not to do this. This will make a difference. And it is certainly not an argument not to do it, that it won't solve every problem. It will save some lives, and we ought to do it.

We have got to work together. That's what our national campaign is about; that is the message that the Ad Council is putting out in these ads; and down deep inside, that's what all of us know we need to do, so that when we see children like Leilani—don't you wish all you ever had to worry about was that the kid you're pulling for can get through the speech in front of the strangers—*[laughter]*—can make it through the athletic event,

can play the solo or sing the song that is so excruciatingly difficult the first time you did it? These are the things that our children ought to be worried about. We ought to give our kids back their childhood. And we can do it, if we do it together.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:12 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to students Leilani Tassillio, who introduced the President, Wyatt Keusch, and Harrison Boatwright; Jack Valenti, president and chief executive officer, Motion Pictures Association of America, Inc.; Richard Masur, president, Screen Actors Guild; Edward O. Fritts, president and chief executive officer, National Association of Broadcasters; former Gov. Roy Romer of Colorado, board member, and Peggy Conlon, president and chief executive officer, Ad Council; and Drew E. Altman, president and chief executive officer, Henry J. Kaiser Foundation.

Statement on Signing the Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999

August 17, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 1568, the "Veterans Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development Act of 1999." This bill will provide assistance to veterans who are entrepreneurs and especially to service-disabled veteran entrepreneurs, men and women who have sacrificed so much in the service of our country. By helping these American heroes to establish, maintain, and grow their own small businesses, we help to sustain our strong economy and express our gratitude for their service to America.

This bill also includes several measures designed to cushion the impact on small businesses when their owners or essential employees who are reservists are ordered to active duty during military conflicts. By providing loans, loan payment deferrals, and technical and managerial assistance for these citizen soldiers, we can help ensure that they do not have to risk their livelihoods while they risk their lives.

I do have a constitutional concern regarding the section of the bill that addresses the composition of the government corporation

that will provide assistance to veterans in the formation and expansion of small businesses. This provision unjustifiably intrudes upon the President's constitutional authority and discretion to appoint executive officials, and, therefore, I will treat this provision as precatory.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
August 17, 1999.

NOTE: H.R. 1568, approved August 17, was assigned Public Law No. 106-50.

Statement on Signing the Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2000

August 17, 1999

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2465, the "Military Construction Appropriations Act, 2000," which provides funding for military construction and family housing programs of the Department of Defense (DOD).

The Act funds the vast majority of my request for military construction projects, the military housing program, and other quality-of-life projects for our military personnel and their families. The requested projects are critical to supporting military readiness and the quality of life of our soldiers and their families. However, I have several concerns with the bill:

- For the second consecutive year, the Congress has not provided the requested level of construction funding for the Chemical Weapons Demilitarization program. This year's reduction of \$93 million to my request substantially increases the risk that the United States will not meet the 2007 Chemical Weapons Convention deadline for the destruction of these chemical weapons. The sooner these weapons are destroyed, the safer we will all be.
- The Congress has chosen to add funds for projects that DOD has not identified as priorities. In particular, \$301 million is provided for 40 projects that are not in DOD's Future Years Defense Program (FYDP).